

Frequently Asked Questions:

The fire department did not respond—why was I fined for a false alarm?

The charge is not based on fire department response. When your alarm company calls the Emergency Communication Center (911), you are fined for a false alarm unless it is cancelled within four (4) minutes.

My alarm system malfunctioned—why was I fined for a false alarm?

A false alarm caused by a malfunctioning alarm system is still a false alarm and you will be fined.

I burned food while cooking and there was smoke—why was I fined for a false alarm?

In situations where the alarm system acts appropriately but there is no emergency that requires an emergency response by the fire department, it is still a false alarm and you will be fined.

My business has manual pull stations, and someone pulled the fire alarm as a prank. I did not pull the fire alarm—why am I being fined for a false alarm?

As the business owner, you are responsible for your alarm system. If a patron or tenant pulls the manual pull station, either on purpose or accidentally, this is still a false alarm and you will be fined.

False Alarm Facts:

- There are approximately 40,000 registered alarm owners in the City of Wichita, and the number grows every day.
- Of the 2,000 fire alarm activations each year in Wichita, 76% are false alarms.
- Each false fire alarm costs the City of Wichita approximately \$1,500. This equates to over \$2 million per year.
- Medical alarm systems are required to be registered, but are not charged a registration fee. Medical alarms are also EXEMPT from false alarm fees.

Alarm systems were designed to protect lives and property. Properly installed, used, and maintained, an alarm system can be a valuable asset.

You Can Make A Difference!

Wichita Fire Department
Fire Prevention Office
455 N Main - 11th Floor
Wichita, KS 67202
Phone: 316-268-4441

Wichita Alarm Program
Alarm Administrator
455 N Main—4th Floor
Wichita, KS 67202
Phone: 316-268-4115 or 877-888-1355
Email: wichitaks@publicsafetycorp.com



False Fire Alarm Information



Wichita Fire Department

www.wichita.gov



A fire alarm signal resulting from a cause other than a fire is a false fire alarm.

Main Causes of False Alarms:

The two leading causes of false fire alarms are unintentional activations and malfunction of the system. Other causes of false fire alarms can include:

- Fumes from overcooked food, including burnt popcorn
- Steam from showers
- Dust from construction work
- Incorrect or poorly designed systems
- Lack of appropriate user training
- Insects
- Lack of maintenance
- Candles and fireplaces
- Tampering with the fire alarm system.

False fire alarms are problematic for many reasons. Not only do they place a large burden on Fire Department resources, they can also cause people to become complacent. People exposed to frequent false fire alarms may not heed the warning in the event of an actual emergency. In business communities, false fire alarms require tenants and staff to stop work and evacuate the building.

False Fire Alarm Prevention Tips:

In an effort to reduce the number of false fire alarms being received by the Wichita Fire Department, we ask all homeowners and property managers to follow these guidelines to ensure your fire alarm system operates as effectively as possible.

- Ensure your fire alarm system is designed and installed by a fire protection company licensed by the City of Wichita. Per City ordinance, residential smoke detectors may be installed by a licensed electrician.
- Have your system inspected, tested, and maintained by a licensed fire protection company at least once every year. Smoke detectors need to be cleaned regularly, according to manufacturer's specifications and Fire Code.
- Ensure all smoke and fire detectors are placed in the correct locations. Smoke detection that is too close to kitchens, cooking appliances, locker rooms, or bathrooms will most likely be accidentally activated by the smoke or steam emitted by these sources.
- Be careful not to generate smoke, dust, or use aerosol products beneath a smoke detector. Cleaning a very dusty floor or room can activate a smoke detector, so ensure the area is properly ventilated.
- Advise your alarm company prior to starting any construction on your home or business.

- Keep records of all system alarms. Document the locations of devices that are sending false signals, and any reasons found for those activations. This information will assist fire prevention contractors identify faulty equipment or improper installation.
- If you notice any hanging wires or damaged equipment, call your alarm company immediately to have the system serviced.
- Keep your contact information updated with your alarm company. Any changes in contact names or phone numbers need to be updated as soon as possible.



The key to preventing false fire alarms is to ensure understanding and proper operations of the fire alarm system.

Remember: When the fire alarm system activates, treat it as though it is a real emergency and evacuate, then call 911 from a safe location outside the building.